DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 158 819 JC 780 477

AUTHOR	Sharkey, Peter L.
TITLE	Learning to Write Sentence by Sentence: A Modular Approach to English Composition.
INSTITUTION	Claremont Graduate School, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, New York, N.Y.; Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C.; National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jun 78
NOTE	31p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; *Composition Skills (Literary); Curriculum Guides; *English Instruction; Expository Writing; *Junior Colleges; Language Skills; Learning Modules; Remedial Instruction; *Remedial Programs; Syntax; *Writing Exercises; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS	College of Marin CA

ABSTRACT

The Learning to Write Sentence by Sentence curriculum was developed at the College of Marin (California) to promote increased student awareness of quality in communication by providing concentrated exercise in writing. This self-paced course forces the student to think before writing, by using rhetorical and complicated instructions on how to convey verbal images in the styles under consideration. It challenges the student to write expository essays at a college level using ambitious work structures. The course of study is composed of three major sections--predication, language, and syntax; within each section are units to be covered in sequence. Each stresses one concept and includes unit objectives and assignments, discussions, suggested supplementary work, and a post-test. A part of the student portion of this modular curriculum is presented in this report, including the general introduction to the course, its objectives and the resources and learning activities which are involved; a description of the course of study; the entirety of the first unit in the predication section; and an outline of subsequent units. (MB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Peter L. Sharkey

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

- ED158819

LEARNING TO WRITE SENTENCE BY SENTENCE:

A MODULAR APPROACH TO ENGLISH COMPOSITION

PETER L. SHARKEY
Professor of English and Humanities
College of Marin
Kentfield, California

Humanities Faculty Development Program
Claremont Graduate School
June 1978

Published by the Humanities Faculty Development Program at Claremont Graduate School, supported as a fellowship program by funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of any of the participating organizations.

JC 780 477

LEARNING TO WRITE SENTENCE BY SENTENCE:
A MODULAR APPROACH TO ENGLISH COMPOSITION

PETER L. SHARKEY

I

Beginning with the false optimism which characterizes most surveys about language skill problems, let us pretend that most of us agree on the following easy conclusions facing community college teachers today:

(1) Students often exhibit an inability to organize their ideas coherently and develop them in writing and speech.

(2) Students cannot read with care, precision, and comprehension.

No one situation can be pinpointed as the cause of these language deficiencies. Although we know that a major factor in successful use of language skills is frequent exercise of those skills, too few individuals have experience in careful reading and writing or in reading with precision and comprehension. It cannot be doubted that the influence of television has been pervasive, with a consequent decline in reading and writing. As the attitude of the American public toward the importance of language proficiency has changed, the opportunity to hear eloquent speech and to read well-written works of English literature has become increasingly unavailable. Education, too, must bear its share of the blame for the deficiencies observed in the American public. For too

long there has been an unwillingness on the part of educational institutions to recognize that the quality of communication has been declining and that changes are necessary.

If, then, these are common, central concerns of the community college, the following general goals for upgrading language skills should leap readily to mind:

(1) Developing within students the desire to improve language skills.

(2) Requiring constant exercise of reading, writing and speaking and expecting all disciplines to attend carefully to these skills by written and verbal comment.

(3) Integrating language skills in all courses, whether technical, vocational, or general education.

Any community college program designed to address these goals should reach as broad a spectrum of the college population as possible. A number of approaches can be used to meet the varying needs of a disparate student body. However, any program should include a procedure to measure the minimum language skill level that will be acceptable for all community college graduates.

These are reasonable goals which could be effected in a variety of ways without unnaturally reversing the direction of most community colleges. But since such discussions about change must take place within the communities which can support implementation, we will not be surprised to hear different versions of the problem with different conclusions and recommendations.

One institutional response to these concerns is a program offered at the College of Marin (California). "Learning to Write Sentence by Sentence" is a curriculum designed to promote increased student awareness of quality in communication and concentrated exercise in writing; by implication, it suggests a model for adaptation to other disciplines, to other programs, and to other institutions. It contains both those elements which are universal to all language proficiency programs and those which are unique to this particular campus setting.

This course of study is designed for the student who is about to try his hand at the expository essay. It assumes that the student is an individual who has something to say and relies heavily upon the desire of the student to find out if this is the case within the special confines of a course of study. It proceeds to challenge the student to write at a college level, lest the essays which he produces in time become childishly correct in grammar and stupefyingly uninteresting. The course is not designed to "cool out" the student who secretly knows that he should not be at college; it is offered to the student who has always felt that his writing is indeed a mirror of his intellect but has known neither where to place the reflector in relation to himself and the light of the outside world nor how to maintain its natural luster. From the start,

this course expects the student to regard the full image of his mind in ambitious word structures--full statements which may be shaped into grammatical predications. Furthermore, it assumes that the student has thought in sentences at some point in his life, even if he has not written so before, and that he must not be discouraged from composing in sentence-like structures before he knows the grammar to do so correctly and consistently.

This course stresses the fact that meaning lies curled up in metaphors, something like the buds of a rose, which open up in the proper conditions. Values are tightly clustered and enfoliated in these buds of perception and language. When we communicate them in writing to others, our responsibility is to create a verbal context, the sentence in this case, which has the conditions for finding, adopting, and creating structures which suit our "value kernels" and conduct their growth. Our verbal structures are images of these value systems.

Since the sentence always has at least one grammatical nucleus, the central predication, it stands to reason that the writer should try to center his writing in the buds of his perceived values. Bringing his main idea into the center of his sentence emphatically focuses and expands the field of the reader's vision. Saying what we mean then, in one sense, means ordering this predication

in an emphatic, unself-conscious manner. In describing architecture, for instance, one's choice of details is pulled toward some central interest that is being evaluated. The details begin to spin centripetally about the nucleus of predication -- something like a whirlpool or a galaxy. It goes without saying that learning to read trial sentences and drafts is as much an exercise in discovering and focusing viewpoints as it is a worrying over spelling, and punctuation. These operations become more and more integrated with practice.

Thinking in sentences, free of the pressure to snap out something clever on the spot, one rotates the buds of value in the sunlight of memories and cares. Nevertheless, the thunder and lightning of spoken outbursts and the fogs and showers of conversations have a perfect right, in fact, an honored place, in essays. How drab longer pieces of writing would be without the human touch of real speech to relieve the intellectual statement. To learn about the differences between written predication and conversation is to realize that introducing the "real world" of speech into compositions is a matter of making literary choices related purely to allowing ideas to flower and grow.

This self-paced course forces the student to think before writing and does so in a rather muscular, uncomprising and unpatronizing way. The instructions

within units have a rhetorical and complicated bent. The first unit, for instance, offers material which is in itself irresistable but is wrapped in a fairly difficult cover to test the student's initial will to engage and consult. The progressive structure and tone of the units is calculated to make the student hazard verbal images of the self which he can master within the conventional grammar presently under consideration. To make too much of the conventions before the act of conceiving "something to say" is to prescribe imitative form upon a mind which must be taught gradually that grammatical syntax is indeed a natural good.

It is also no longer safe nor wise to assume that any student who elects to learn about sentences before writing expository essays has just left a bone-head grammar class or a production-line high school. The profile of current community college enrollments argues that teachers and their courses must be ready and willing to meet an incredibly diverse student body on its own individual grounds and to be sensitive to its different backgrounds and needs. This self-paced course can afford to preserve standards while customizing instruction.

What follows is a part of the student portion of that modular curriculum, "Learning to Write Sentence By Sentence." It contains the general introduction, the course of study, a sample of one predication unit, and

an outline of subsequent Predication units for a student reader. Each unit stresses one concept and includes objectives, assignments, discussions, suggested supplementary work and a posttest.

II

LEARNING TO WRITE SENTENCE BY SENTENCE

An Introduction

Good college writing is not the art of making verbs agree with subjects, or the art of avoiding comma splices, or even the art of being original. These are subordinate arts which have a contribution to make to good writing, but they are not its essence. Good writing is effective and accurate communication. A good writer must in the first place have something to say. But he is a writer because he can transfer that "something," which originally exists only in his imagination, into the imagination of other people with a minimum amount of cooperation upon their part. This transfer cannot, of course, be direct; it must be achieved by the manipulation of arbitrary symbols, words, written on paper. Successful writing is an astonishing achievement when it is considered closely, and the student who expects to master the art without a lot of effort is very foolish indeed.

But what do we mean by "something to say"? Perhaps once in a thousand instances, outside an English composition

class, we really want to communicate a simple "something." We want to describe the Grand Canyon or a friend or a concert. Perhaps we want to narrate, to explain the order in which particular events took place. We might want to describe the sequence of events which led to our being busted, mistakenly, for selling grass. We might want to send to a friend at another college our recipe for crepes or home brew (recipes are really a kind of narrative). In such instances it is possible that what you want to communicate is a simple term, a noun, modified by appropriate qualifiers.

But it is unlikely. Even in the instances given above, it is probably that what you really want to communicate is not a modified noun but a sentence. If you should be interrupted in your writing, for instance, by your roommate wanting to know what you are doing, you might reply, "I am writing to the judge about my arrest." Here, "about my arrest" is a simple noun subject. But you would surely mean, "I am writing to the judge to explain that the sequence of events which led to my arrest clearly proves that it was a case of mistaken identity." In other words, your real intention would not be properly represented by a noun; your real intention would be properly summarized in a sentence.

Some General Concepts and Goals

Since all of the basic principles of composition

operate in composing a sentence, the following course of study will stress that a good sentence, like a good essay or a good book, requires a reasoned organization, a point of view, a consistent and appropriate tone, form, and diction. Put in an ideal light, our goal is to achieve good correspondence between the sentence you compose and the act of thinking or imagining which it seeks to convey. To describe our goal in simplest terms is to foster simple-minded, uninteresting, timid, and mechanical scribbling. Let's put our goal another way: you must try to compose accurate sentences whose structures reflect and embody their theses and which have an emphatic tone and point of view. There, given "something to say," the form and sense should come together in a good sentence. This course of study will teach you an attractive, albeit unnerving, variety of approaches to this end. You must be ready sometimes to walk through a field of eggs and at other times in pastures of waving grain. The purpose of this introduction has been to give you poise and confidence at the starting line; it has been written deliberately to make you read it slowly and thoughtfully. You will be warned again and again that the craft of forceful writing cannot be practiced well without the art of critical, perceptive reading - of both your own work and that of others.

Resources, Materials, and Connections

To take this course you will need:

1. The units themselves, completed in order, one at a time.
2. The Manual.[1]
3. A good portable dictionary.
4. A tutor who can be consulted on a weekly basis at a regular hour.

Learning Activities

The learning activities prescribed in each unit are quite similar. Careful reading of the text of the unit and exhaustive study and memorization of rules in The Manual are absolutely necessary. Specimens from student compositions are to be rewritten as prescribed. Identifications of grammatical distinctions are frequently demanded. The dictionary will be needed periodically. Quizzes are sometimes given to prove your mastery over various technical points of grammar and punctuation. You will be requested from time to time to compile lists of terms and concepts gathered from the "outside world" of newspapers, television, and conversation. And most of all, since this is a course in writing, you will be expected to compose a variety of statements on some fairly interesting topics.

General Goals of the Predication Units

In the following five units you will be asked to

compose a series of descriptive sentences about a variety of subjects. You will analyze your own work as well as similar work of other students, and you will re-write extensively. In writing and re-writing, the general goals will be to produce an accurate sentence which is correct in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. It must also embody some particular point of view towards its subject -- a reason for remarking upon it and "something to say" about it -- although this need be no more than a strong impression such as "Isn't it beautiful?" or "Isn't it ugly?" You should not tie up your tongue at first trying to be too stylish; you will have plenty of opportunities at the right times to call on the muses of artistic inspiration who, given half a chance to operate in a reasonably neat setting, turn out to be surprisingly liberal with their "graces."

The Course of Study

This composition course has three major sections which are designed to be studied in order. They are Predication, Language, and Syntax. The units within the sections must be taken one at a time in sequence. The timing and order of the assignments must be honored because the experience is essentially a condensed version of a much longer and far more leisurely course of study (a lifetime of reading and writing). This is not to say

that you must not work laterally on other writing or grammar projects which you might happen upon at the same time. Heaven forbid that your browsing, investigating, or reading through the materials should be cut off by some irrational compulsion to "grind out" a certain unit. But the course does make sense in its present order. It is possible, however, once you have worked your way down the road of predication assignments, to work simultaneously on parts of the language and syntax units.

Since you are relatively free to work at your own pace, the language section of the course will offer you the best opportunity to make tracks because it entails more routine work and memorization than the others. Assignments and quizzes have been designed to bring your mechanical grammar skills up to scratch while you are doing parallel writing assignments. The Predication Units, however, must be done first and in a rather strictly prescribed order. You will understand this regimen better as you advance.

As you finish units or parts of units, be sure to save all of the writing which you do because it will be used again in subsequent assignments. Let's learn to write sentence by sentence one step at a time.

Predication Unit 1 Accurate and Emphatic Description

*To recognize the simple sentence.
*To correct sentence fragments.
*To make subjects and verbs agree.
*To correct spelling and capitalization errors.
*To identify key metaphors.
*To improve central predications.
*To evaluate point of view.
*To compose an accurate descriptive sentence in which the grammar, spelling, and capitalization are correct and the point of view is clearly and emphatically expressed.

Assignment: Compose a sentence of at least twenty-five words which describes the hills around the college.

The enterprise of writing reveals constantly how well we know and control what we think. When we sit down to compose a simple description, the words that we select communicate what is on our minds at just that moment of writing. If we have sorted out our subject from other pressing interests, such as the temperature of the classroom and last night's encounter, the words will much more likely reflect thoughts exclusively about our subject. Our lives should make our writing more discriminating. The very act of composition helps us to be more thoughtful. Sometimes we are so distracted by other interests (My car is running in a tow-away zone by the chem. lab!) that it takes at least one draft just to make us realize how far away we are mentally from the specific task of thinking before us. In short, we often drag much more into the pictures which our words create than is appropriate to our

writing purpose. Given only a few words with which to identify and characterize the hills in all of their geographical and atmospheric complexity, our verbal attention is tested to the limit. How can we make our feelings about ourselves and about our perceptions into an accurate and interesting verbal portrayal of the reality of the hills themselves for a reader who has little personal or sympathetic interest in us? How do we go about identifying and adjusting our viewpoint as writers?

Perhaps it will help to analyze how other student writers have acted in the same situation. Let's test a few examples for concentration, accuracy, liveliness and control. This first example was obviously written on the first day of class after a leisurely summer vacation:

> The calmness of a densely wooded hillside is disturbed only by a young runner, barefooted, who is late to class.

The advent of school, with all the assignments and pressures, is at war with this writer's summer, and the little sentence proves to be his battleground.

But before we discard this honest effort as a refusal to describe in detail the hills themselves as assigned, let's discuss it from a more limited compositional point of view. How would you describe the relationship between the form of his sentence (especially the order in which things have been presented for our consideration) and the

writer's viewpoint? What are the key words which present ideas? Does the writer feature and develop ideas? Is the runner near or far? Does it matter? Is this an accurate picture of the hills? What literary touches do you perceive?

Since running late to class was still on our writer's mind as he wrote, his appreciation of the calm of the hills, which is obviously more appropriate for his writing purpose, did not have a chance to develop. His perception of the objective reality has been diverted, and so his verbal description has been shaped accordingly. Despite his mental preoccupation, the grammatical form of the sentence does communicate a feeling of completeness, a sense of purposeful movement from one place to another. The featured quality of the hills is indeed the grammatical subject of the sentence; the rest of the statement dramatizes a contrast which draws our attention away from the subject of the assignment. For whatever it is worth, we have a story rather than a picture.

The next example was written by a student who grabbed up his writing materials and flew from the classroom the moment he heard the assignment. Although we never learn why escape was uppermost in his mind at that moment of composition, it certainly affects his description:

> Tree tops reaching up to the Heavens--over proud and inviting--teasing one to venture into the hill's vast domain--beginning with only low curves then rising ever steeper to culminate at a little shack.

When asked to describe the hills, which were quite familiar to him, why did he have to run outdoors at once for a first-hand, pulsing inspiration? Had he no confidence in the relative quiet of his memory and thought as a source for telling details and a conceptual frame for his picture? Or was he merely uncomfortable in class?

Psychological speculation aside, we read that his "tree tops" appear to be "reaching," "inviting" and "teasing," which indicates a fairly common projection of his own desires upon inanimate nature. The trees have become characters in the little nature theater of his description. Certain kinds of accuracy are sacrificed to such heart-pounding enthusiasm, regardless of its sincerity. Striking vistas in nature should excite and move us deeply, but if such unbridled, open sentiment gives rise to travelogue language such as "vast domain" and "even steeper," it is probably unconvincing. For all the huffing and puffing, it is impossible to know from the statement as it stands what or who is "beginning." The laws of time, space and grammar have been suspended as the writer throws his perceptions emotionally around the scene. His words follow a line of vision that blurs and then returns to focus with a bump on an improbable detail--the shack. The main theme is "desire" which the repetition of dramatic language conveys. We are left with a mystery about the relevancy of emotion.

Here is another selection which raises questions about the purpose of describing the frame of the writer's perception:

> A mountain woman, oblivious to all going on around her, a sleeping princess awaiting the lover's kiss.

While "tree tops" brought us shaking into a hyperactive world of vivid, uncontrolled perception and emotion, "a mountain woman" withdraws just as suddenly into a memorial or literary world of shadowy legends and vague make-believes. Beside the fact that Mt. Tamalpais is only one of the many hills around the college (so long, accuracy), or that it looks like a sleeping maiden only from one particular and distant point of view, the legend of the sleeping princess is the privileged information of rather few Marin inhabitants. This description leans rather heavily upon an external, literary crutch, and it must appear, therefore, to be incomplete and private, perhaps even cute, to a majority of common readers who honestly expect an accurate description. Describing the hills as a reclining woman might prove effective if we could make the reader see some details, but we must bear in mind that his "imaginative" approach will inevitably restrict the writer's viewpoint to only a part of the scene. Such are the dangers of a sudden retreat into an "artsy closet." So snug is the legend in our writer's memory that the reference to it momentarily protects him from the assignment. This description and the previous one reveal two

extreme kinds of subjective response to a request for a serious verbal version of pondered experience. It requires more awareness of what we think than we might have supposed at the outset.

So busy have we been trying to untangle and decode the last two efforts at describing the hills that we failed to notice that neither were grammatical sentences. Absence of emotional focus and mental framing often results in fragmentary verbal constructions. Let's pause for a moment to review a few basic grammatical requirements for sentences and also to acquire some more technical tools for handling verbal structures. Read and study the following brief passages in The Manual. Then complete the illustrative exercises found within these pages:

Chapter 1	Simple Sentence	pp. 1-6
Chapter 8	Fragment	pp. 46-51
Chapter 9	Predication	pp. 52-57
Chapter 13	Subject/Verb Agreement	pp. 75-81

If you still have doubts about your mastery of these basic distinctions and definitions after wrestling with The Manual, go over your exercises with a tutor. It will be impossible to advance in our progressive course of study without absolute mastery over these fundamentals of grammar.

Now you are ready to examine the relationship between grammatical structure, point of view and expressive emphasis in the selection of descriptions on the next page. Each

should be treated as a little essay on the hills. Read them analytically, underlining once the simple subject and twice the main verb of each sentence or of each independent clause within each sentence. Correct the errors of spelling and capitalization which divide our reading attention. Keep the dictionary at your side. Chase every rabbit that moves. Does the statement stand on its own two feet? Is it grammatically complete? Has it a subject and predicate? Do you feel the need to add something to or delete from it? Finally, is it true?

Also, since our reading together has been concentrating upon the particular ways each writer has been looking at the hills, what I have been calling "point of view," you will find your own analysis of "where the writer is coming from" much easier if you will note the two or three most striking or emphatic words in each sentence. Identify these words with a circle and try to figure out whether the writer introduced them accidentally in the heat of the assignment or coolly and strategically as an act of composition. Contemplate the relationship of the writer's ideas and his predication.

Student Samples:

1. Tree Tops reaching up the Heavens--over proud and inviting--teasing one to venture into the hill's vast domain--beginning with only low curves then rising ever-steeper to culminate at a little shack.

2. A mountain woman, oblivious to all going on around her, a sleeping princess awaiting the lover's kiss.

3. The calmness of a densly wooded hillside is disturbed only by a young runner, bare footed who is late to class.

4. When I look out the windows at the hills surrounding the college I see Mt. Tamampais towering above everything below as though it were a mother watching over her children.

5. Mt. Tamalpais and the surrounding hills, in their majesty, oversee the college as if they were the king and his court protecting their subjects.

6. To gaze upon the majic mountian defussed in swrilling green of dence foliage, earie but seen through a maze of barren tenicals reaching from the trees near by, paints an eary but majestic panorama.

7. My inward parts move through the rythem of these hills which exist in mind's eye and the gentle spirit that so forms an everlasting image of peach, tranquility, and love.

8. His books forgotten for the moment, the student drifts in dreamy fantasy on the school-lawn grass, his eyes gazing half-attentively at the image of the distant hills, their velvety-brown chapparal spreading up the sides like caressing fingers in the strong, lazy heat.

9. The hills surrounding the college are covered with tire tracks and footprints and dump trucks and bodies and spit and cigarette butts and concrete walls and signs that say "authorized personnel only" and stairs and dogs, and sometimes, if you look hard, you can see grass and ivy and trees.

10. In the wind torn purple mountains of the Rockies, in the greatest gray waters of the ocean storm, in the burned red loneliness if Arizona deserts, do I yet yearn for the passive pink sunsets singing the glories that announce the green hills of Marin.

11. Mt. Tam is the beautiful, green "sleeping lady" overlooking the College of Marin-Kentfield area, the Mill Valley area, and the coastal range of Marin County.

12. The comforting, familiar, but thirsty hills that surround College of Marin are finally receiving their long awaited drink which is turning the hard crumbly earth to rich brown mud.

13. As we the aspiring students of this college, look around our surroundings at the school, we can see to one side a high spreading range of evergreens covering mountains peak, while on the other side of the spreading campus we have a rolling, almost barren looking, wind-swept hill, covered with wild flowing wheat.

14. Rising like a green pyramid from the top of the Student Union Building Mt. Tam commands the viewers attention with the lower tree-studded hills paying homage to it like slaves to their master.

Let's work on one together just to get the hand of it.

(When I look out the windows at the hills surrounding the college) I see Mt. Tamalpais towering above everything below as though it were a mother watching over her children.

Sometimes the overture and curtain-raising become more important than the show itself. The self-conscious wind-up (I look, I see) presents a false, or superficial point of view--an unnecessarily polite side-note concerning time and place. That is not to say that a writer should never use "I" to present an idea, but there is no point in shining the spotlight upon yourself only to duck back behind the curtain. Because "I see" is the central predication (the grammatical lever which controls the balance and movement of the entire sentence) a dramatic

contrast exists between "I," the writer (subject), and "towering" Tamalpais (object), a contrast which is far less interesting and more superficial than the forceful "idea" which follows. Should we have to wade through such mind mechanics to get to the writer's chief idea--a towering, protective mother? Our writer senses a dramatic comparison--a metaphor--between the mountain as tower/mother and the hills/college/students as her children, but he is too timid to state it forthrightly. What if we helped him by rewriting slightly, by moving the commanding metaphor (towering) into the driver's seat of the sentence, into the subject/verb position of predication:

> Mount Tamalpais towers above the hills and college below as though it were a mother watching over her children who return her caring looks from the windows of our classroom.

You may wish to "finetune" the second half of this sentence to make it more expressive of our writer's thesis which points a special contrast between nature and man.

Each of the sentences which we have before us for study is strikingly individual despite hackneyed and trite phrases which distort particulars and ruin the overall effect. Each typically formulates its viewpoint in a self-organizing manner which challenges our attention. In discovering where one writer's thought runs off the track, we may also find an unexpected resource of memory or feeling which needs rerouting within the little world

of the descriptive sentence. How curious it is to behold the transormation of a time-worn term such as "majesty," for instance, into an appropriate servant of the "regal" point of view of the following sentence:

> Mt. Tamalpais and the surrounding hills, in their majesty, oversee the college as if they were the king and his court protecting their subjects.

Once again, a metaphor commands the writer's field of vision which has been efficiently shaped into the conceptual frame for his assertion. Once we have detected the regal comparison between the mountain and the king, the hierarchical contrast between regent and subjects clicks neatly into place.

As we proceed together through this course of study, you will learn to recognize point of view and thesis (a more narrow or efficient version of viewpoint) by their syntactical forms: contrast, comparison, enumeration, definition, cause and effect. You will be able to trace your way quickly and directly from the key metaphors and terms as they appear (within and without the conventionally critical positions of the sentence) to an identification and grasp of the idea expressed by the writer--who is usually yourself! The ecology bias of sentence number 9, for example, which is based upon a sentimental contrast, will announce itself to you through the writer's confusion of grammatical parts; the topographical distancing of number 13 and the geographical pedantry of number 10 will come

into focus; the vague kind of sensuality expressed in numbers 6 and 8 will be easier to handle; and the triumphs of 12 and 14 will make great sense.

After you have digested all of this and worked over the sentences, perhaps even discussed them with your tutor or grandmother, being always sure to stop short of exhaustion and grubby nitpicking, select two sentences which you like well enough to rewrite. Try to bring their points of view into emphatic line with their grammatical form. Reorganize their predication if necessary. Try to preserve the integrity of the original, but don't be afraid to add touches of your own which will increase their clarity and beauty. Now, also rewrite sentences 6 and 8. See if you can eliminate, or at least reduce, their emotional theaters.

When you have finished this rather demanding process, turn in your completed Predication Unit 1. Each sentence should have 1) its predications and 2) metaphors or similes identified with the appropriate lines and circles. If your identifications are not up to snuff, your tutor will ask to see 3) your work in The Manual. Finally, you must turn in 4) your rewritten sentences which will require, of course, your greatest effort and care. It is good policy and practice from the outset to do the recommended exercises, if for no other reason than to become familiar with the critical, descriptive vocabulary which will be used throughout our course of study--even

if you are a whiz at grammar. When you turn in your completed unit, you will receive in return your original sentence with some corrections and suggestions. You must then rewrite and resubmit it. When this work is satisfactorily finished, you may go on to the thrills and chills of Predication Unit 2.

Here, then, is a brief checklist of Predication Unit 1:

A. Compose a sentence which describes the hills.

B. 1. Identify the main subjects and verbs in each of the 14 sentences.

2. Identify the two or three key metaphors in each.

3. Do the assigned exercises in The Manual.

4. Rewrite sentences 6 and 8 plus two of your own choosing.

C. Rewrite your own original sentence.

D. Post-test: Compose a new sentence of at least 25 words which describes the hills around the college.

When you have received a satisfactory grade for this work, you are qualified for the next unit of study.

Subsequent Predication Units

Each of the four remaining Predication Units continue in this pattern. Each focuses on an increasingly complex concept, making the units both sequential and cumulative in nature.

Predication Unit 2 Expanded and Reinforced Viewpoint

*To recognize dependent clauses.

*To correct spelling and punctuation errors.
*To compare independent and dependent clauses.
*To identify modifiers, connectives, and expansions.
*To build complex sentences.
*To rewrite predication for emphasis.
*To evaluate the role of metaphors in sentences.
*To compose an accurate descriptive sentence in which the grammar, spelling, and capitalization are correct and the point-of-view is emphatically expressed within the central predication and clearly articulated in the modifying details of the whole.

Predication Unit 3 Order and Movement

*To identify the form of verbs.
*To correct faulty parallelism.
*To achieve parallel order in giving instructions.
*To prepare the reader to follow instructions.
*To improve sentence movement.
*To compose a descriptive sentence in which the verbs are appropriately and emphatically aligned to present clearly a sequence of related actions.

Predication Unit 4 Compounding Statements

*To identify compound sentences.
*To memorize connectives.
*To recognize logical functions of connectives.
*To construct compound sentences using coordinating conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs.
*To convert compound sentences.
*To compose a longer descriptive sentence which uses subordination and coordination to develop logical relationships between concepts and actions.

Predication Unit 5 Agency and Context

*To recognize cause and effect.
*To correct faulty predication.
*To identify sentence patterns which use "to be."
*To convert "to be" predications.
*To build verbal modifiers.
*To emphasize agency.
*To limit context.
*To compose predications which accurately and emphatically report the relationships between the causes, circumstances, and secondary consequences of an event.

III

"Learning to Write Sentence by Sentence" is only one part of a campus-wide effort to improve language skills. Although the main responsibility for establishing standards and maintaining them among students fell to the English faculty, all teachers were encouraged to recognize standards in their assignments and to provide opportunities for students to exercise writing skills throughout the curriculum. Fewer machine-graded exams and more essays and essay exams were recommended. In order to achieve this, teaching assistants and student readers were trained by the English faculty and assigned to various departments; a central tutorial manual was composed which could be used campus-wide; degree requirements were revised; diagnostic exams were rewritten and various ad hoc remedial courses devised. Progress in

writing skills increased substantially through opportunities to exercise them throughout the curriculum. But without the cooperation of the entire college community, this progress could not be made.

This program does keep the humanities at the center of arguments about the goals and means of remediation. It can be used as a model for humanities curricula which includes remediation and denies its usual tangential status. This particular remedial writing course incorporates assumptions and skills necessary for humanistic education: a belief in the worth of the individual, an expectation for the best use of skills and abilities, a belief in language as creator and reflector of thought, and an emphasis upon logical and disciplined study. It is the heart of a coordinated effort throughout the community college curriculum. Humanistic literacy asks this kind of concern.

NOTES

[1] MaryAnne Hogan and Lisa Rose, The Manual: A Tutorial Syllabus (Kentfield, CA: College of Marin, 1977).

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

OCT 13 1978

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES